

Use the Rubric Provided to Assess My Use of Word Choice in Each Clip Below

Clip One:

This summer, I was in charge of running a writing camp. There were a lot of kids who joined. Chris was one of them. Chris hated writing. He only came to camp because his mom made him. At first, he was kind of quiet. Then, he was kind of irritated. Then, he decided that he liked a girl in the class. This is why kept coming. In the end, they wrote a short story together. I think Chris was glad he came to camp after all, because he met Reid. I was glad Chris came to camp too. It turns out, he was a good writer. Letting him work with Reid gave him some motivation to show me this.

Clip Two:

“You know,” he drawled, taking a seat within the circle, “I totally don’t want to be here.”

“Then why are you here?” I asked. After all, it was a fair enough question. I can understand showing up at school when you don’t want to be there. You don’t have a choice. But why would you come to a summer writing camp if you didn’t want to be there?

“My mom made me come,” Chris continued. “I’ve been driving her crazy all summer—getting in a ton of trouble.”

My stomach sank. This was not the sort of kid I wanted to deal with all week. Camp was supposed to be a place for kids to enjoy writing. Not a place where parents sent their kids for punishment. I could feel my blood pressure rising.

“Anyway, last week, when I put dish detergent in our hot tub and broke it? She asked me what I hated doing most in life,” Chris grinned up at me. “I told her I hated writing. So she decided to sign me up for your camp.”

I didn’t know what to say, but that was okay. Reid had just entered the room.

Reid was from Las Vegas. She spent the summer with her grandmother, and because she loved writing, her grandmother decided to send her to camp. Reid was also, much to Chris’s surprise, incredibly pretty. Suddenly, I began to understand how I might be able to motivate Chris a tiny bit better.

“Reid? Meet Chris,” I began, ushering her into a desk directly beside him. “Chris? Meet Reid.”

Within the space of that moment, Chris was happy to be at camp, and fortunately for all of us, Reid seemed to return his affection. By the end of the week, they had written a short story together. Reid posted it on our writing blog, and the two of them made plans to keep in touch online once Reid returned to Las Vegas at summer’s end. I’m pretty sure I’ll be seeing them both at camp again this summer.

Sometimes, teachers think that motivating kids to write is all about splashy lesson plans. Chris taught me that this isn’t always the case. Sometimes, motivating a kid to write has less to do with teaching them anything and more to do with providing them inspiration.

Pretty girls seem to inspire middle school boys well.

Funny, we never learned about this when we were training to become teachers in college.

